From: Tom Cochran
To: Keith, Kirsten
Subject: Special Spring Update Action Alert
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Special spring action alert update.

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TO: The Mayor

FROM: Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director

The Spring recess is about to begin, and Congress will be coming home to their states, districts in your city. Your constituents are their constituents. You must talk to them about how important CDBG and our top issues are your cities. Don't

let them come back to D.C. without having heard from you, and let me know if you receive feedback that can be helpful.

During our Winter Leadership Meeting in early March, I presented five key priorities that needed focus over the coming days in Washington: CDBG and budget cuts, infrastructure, tax reform, immigration, and healthcare.

Under the leadership of Conference President Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett and many key mayors, we have taken important actions on all five of these priorities.

During the leadership meeting, almost 40 mayors engaged on all of these priorities with top leaders, both Republicans and Democrats, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Appropriations Chair Rodney Frelinghuysen, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and her entire leadership team, House Transportation Chairman Bill Shuster, DOT Secretary Elaine Chao, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, Senate Health and Labor Committee Chair Lamar Alexander, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and many, many others.

Immigration and ICE Actions

Our President, Mayor Mick Cornett convened and led an important meeting of mayors and police chiefs with Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly on the immigration issues that are causing so much concern in cities across the country on March 29. This effort was built around the strong coalition we have worked hard to established and maintain between mayors and police chiefs. In this meeting were many top leaders of our organization including Mayor Cornett, Vice President Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans, Second Vice President Steve Benjamin of Columbia, Chair of our Criminal and Social Justice Committee Karen Freeman-Wilson of Gary, Chair of our Latino Alliance Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles, Co-Chair of our Immigration Reform Task Force Jorge Elorza of Providence, Mayor Mike Rawlings of Dallas, Mayor Steve Adler of Austin, President of the Major Cities Police Chiefs Tom Manger, President of the Police Executive Research Forum Scott Thompson, Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck, Seattle Police Chef Kathleen O'Toole, the Executive Directors of the National League of Cities and National Association of Counties, and others.

We are pushing DHS to give us their definition of a so-called “sanctuary city”. Mayor Cornett has labeled this a political term instead of legal term. We didn't get the legal definition at that meeting. So, we have requested another meeting to present facts on the ground as we go forward. In addition, we have requested and been given a date to meet with Attorney General Sessions. He has been quite bold in his assertions and suggestions that cities, counties and some states are not to their fullest extent possible enforcing federal law. At issue are constitutional rights that our mayors, city, county officials, governors, police chiefs, and police officers swear to uphold when they are sworn in to protect the Constitution. We will continue to work our way through the challenges we face at the local, county and state levels operating without true reform of our national immigration system.

Days of Action and Visits to Capitol Hill

We have had mayors testifying all over Capitol Hill. Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed testified this week in the House for USCM on the need for transportation investment. Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage has twice testified for USCM on brownfields reauthorization. Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh testified for USCM on FEMA and emergency management priorities. Lancaster Mayor Rick Gray testified for USCM in the Senate on water mandates. And there have been and will continue to be more testimony by mayors.

We held a National Day of Action on Heath Care led by Boston Mayor Marty Walsh and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, as well as a National Day of Action on Immigration led by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Anaheim Mayor Tom Tait, Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza, and Seattle Mayor Ed Murray. Hundreds of mayors acted through these efforts, and continue to speak out on our priorities. Our hashtag, #MayorsStand4All has been widely used.

These efforts have had an impact in Washington and garnered major media coverage. But the challenges we face remain, and there is much more work needed in the days and weeks ahead.

Community Development Block Grants

Per the emails I sent to you earlier this week, we have launched a major campaign to fight the Administration's proposed total elimination of the CDBG program, as well as the HOME program. We will need your leadership on this, especially as we approach National Community Development Week, April 17-22. I encourage you to use social media to highlight what you are doing in your cities with CDBG so that your Senators, Representatives, citizens, and the media can understand what is built by CDBG, who is served by CDBG, and what would happen if CDBG goes away.

We are asking you to use the hashtag #Fight4CDBG when using Twitter, Facebook, and Instragram. While doing so, tag your congressional delegation so they can see what you are doing. I have launched a war room effort on this and will be contacting your offices to help secure action on this top priority for the nation's mayors.

We also need you to fill out our CDBG survey and sign our letter opposing the elimination of CDBG.

Municipal Bonds and Tax Reform

There is serious concern that Congress will now move to another top priority for the Trump administration: tax reform. Based on all our discussions on Capitol Hill, the driving motivation for those crafting the bills seems to be to lower both corporate tax rates and individual tax brackets. If this is going to be done without ballooning the deficit, then they will be looking for large offsets. And one of the largest offsets out there is reducing deductions.

Over the past several years, and with leadership being provided by our Second Vice President Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin, we have built and led a strong coalition of almost 60 organizations united to stop either the elimination or capping of tax-exempt bonds. We have educated many leaders in Congress as what bonds do to help build the infrastructure our people and businesses depend on every day. We have made progress in getting our message out, but we remain under serious threat in the tax reform debate as members look for offsets to pay for bracket reductions. Here is the most recent coalition letter we have

sent up on bonds.

A second issue, which is becoming very serious, is a proposal to either eliminate or cap the deductibility of state and local taxes. This is a fight we have not seriously faced since the tax reform act of 1986. But there are some estimates that this deduction costs the federal government over $1 trillion over 10 years, making it a serious target in tax reform. As we did in 1986, we are launching a campaign against "double taxation" to help the White House and Congress understand what is at stake in this fight.

On both the issue of bonds and deductibility, we stand united with the "Big 7" State and Local Coalition, which includes the Governors and State Legislatures and Cities and Counties. Just this week we sent our tax letter to all of Congress, letting them know we intend to fight hard to defend tax policies that are truly the historical bedrock of the federal, state and local partnership.

Both the fight on CDBG, as well as Bonds and Deductibility, will be very hard and require focus and strategy. But we have been through these battles before, we have mayoral leaders, we have allies across the country, we have champions in Congress, and we have those in the private sector who know how important these tools are to the economic strength of the metro economies.

Infrastructure

We are still trying to get a better idea of what the Trump Infrastructure plan is and when they are going to unveil it. There are many observers who believe the plan can come sooner than expected and that it'll be used as a sweetener for another issue, such as tax reform. At issue here is public-private funding through tax incentives versus direct federal funds to cities. Most believe that between Congress and the White House, there should be a hybrid plan involving both.

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